

## PART 2: MAKING TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS

### 1. TMCs

#### A. Definition

TMCs are regional travel agencies with Federal contracts to provide travel services to government employees conducting official travel. TMC's represent a portion of the Travel Management Systems concept implemented by GSA on January 1, 2001.

#### B. Use of Other Travel Agencies Prohibited

USDA is a mandatory user of the General Services Administration (GSA) travel management center program; therefore, it is **mandatory** that **all GS and CO** employees use the established TMC's to arrange for common carrier transportation, booking of hotel/motel accommodations, and rental cars. There are only three Departmental exceptions to this mandatory use:

- Any travel for which advance reservations are impractical; e.g., when a traveler is on the road and does not know where lodging will be needed.
- For travel situations where only a rental car is needed, travelers may deal directly with the appropriate company (see Paragraph 6).
- Hotel accommodations for a conference, seminar, etc., where the sponsoring organization has arranged for a special rate and ensured that the facility complies with the standards of the Hotel and Motel Fire Safety Act.

No other travel agencies may be used to purchase travel services for official government travel. Using travel agents other than the established TMC for the ODS is a violation of the TMC's contract with the Federal Government and subjects the government to a suit for damages for breach of contract.

If use of the established TMC is not convenient due to time constraints or similar exigencies, common carrier services may be purchased directly from the common carrier using the traveler's government-issued charge card. **No other means of procuring common carrier services are permitted by law. (See Part 5, Sources of Funds, paragraph 1.)** Use of other means may result in a claim for reimbursement being denied.

#### C. Services Provided by TMCs

TMCs provide a complete range of travel services. These include:

- reservations and ticketing for travel via common carriers (air, rail, bus, ship)
- reservations for rental cars
- hotel/motel reservations and arrangements for conference facilities
- delivery of common carrier tickets
- reservations for bus transportation for groups
- periodic management reports on travel activity
- point of contact for Agency officials when problems arise.

## 2. Choosing Mode of Transportation

### A. Most Advantageous Means

Government employees are generally required by law to use the most expeditious and cost-efficient means of transportation in conducting official travel. Usually (though not always), this will be the use of a common carrier. Other means of transportation, such as use of POV and the payment of mileage, may be authorized if it is considered advantageous **to the Agency**, and the total cost will be less than that incurred through the use of a common carrier. The personal preference/convenience of the traveler is not an issue to be considered except when documented medical considerations are at issue. Deviations from the most advantageous means must be specifically approved on the travel authorization. Any applicable "excess" expenses as well as time charges to leave must be borne by the traveler.

## 3. Government Contract Fares

### A. General Rule -- Mandatory Use

The Federal Government maintains contracts with common carriers for special government fares for travel between certain cities (city-pair fares). As a general rule, use of these fares, when available, is **mandatory** (for exceptions, see paragraph 3C). Failure to use contract fares when otherwise available is a violation of the applicable Federal contracts with the airlines, and may leave the government liable for damages for breach of contract.

In areas served by more than one airport, the airport that offers the lowest contract fare available generally must be used, unless the **approving official**, on a case-by-case basis, determines that use of the higher cost alternative airport is more advantageous to the government. Approving officials should use the following criteria when making this determination:

- There is no cost limitation between airports. Traveler is encouraged to use the airport most convenient to their home or office.
- departure time affects the performance of necessary work at the office before departure or planned work at the destination
- departure and/or arrival times unreasonably infringe on the employee's non-duty hours
- approving official determines that other factors make the higher cost airport more advantageous

In cases where a higher cost alternative airport is approved, the "remarks" section of the travel authorization must contain the following statements:

- the lowest fare airport (name of airport), fare amount is \$\$\$
- the alternate airport (name of airport), fare amount is \$\$\$
- the alternate airport is authorized as more advantageous to the government

It is incumbent upon the approving officials to document this determination and the traveler should not make the reservation for the higher fare airport until the approving official authorizes such use on the approved travel authorization. Failure to document and receive authorization for the higher fare airport may result in the traveler being disapproved for reimbursement of the increased cost. Approving officials will be held accountable for their actions and decisions in these matters.

County offices should contact State offices for information about the availability of contract carriers.

## B. Prohibited For Personal Use

Government contract fares are available **only** for official government travel or those portions of a complete trip that are for official government purposes. They may **not** be used by employees for **personal** (non-official) reasons. Employees are liable, at the commercially-available fare, for any portions of a trip that are non-official. Charges for these portions of a trip must be charged directly to an employee's *personal* credit card -- not their government-issued charge card.

**Note:** See also Part 1, paragraph 1 re: the issues that may properly be considered when arranging for official travel.

## C. Exception Codes

Employees may be authorized to fly on a non-contract carrier **only** under the 5 exceptions listed below. The non-use code justifying the exception **must** be approved on the travel authorization and the travel claim forms. **The mere convenience or preference of the traveler is not a consideration under the regulations.** The exception codes are:

- 01: Seating space on the scheduled contract flight is not available in time to accomplish the purpose of travel, or use of contract service would require an employee to incur unnecessary overnight lodging costs which would increase the total cost of the trip; or
- 02: The contract's flight schedule is inconsistent with explicit policies of individual Federal departments and agencies or other mandatory users of scheduling employee travel during normal working hours. (**Note: Policy on the use of this exception code requires authorizing officials to exercise discretion in determining whether or not to reasonably require individual employees to travel during non-duty hours in specific circumstances.**)
- 03: A non-contract carrier offers a lower fare available to the general public, the use of which will result in a lower *total* trip cost to the Government -- including the combined costs of transportation, lodging, meals, and related expenses. (**Note: This exception does NOT apply if the contract carrier(s) offers a comparable fare and has seats available at that fare, or if the lower fare offered by a non-contract carrier is restricted to government and military travelers on official business and may only be purchased with a GTR or government-issued credit card.**)
- 04: Rail service is available, and such service is cost effective and is consistent with the mission.
- 05: Smoking is permitted on the contract flight and the nonsmoking section of the aircraft for the contract flight is not acceptable to the traveler.

## D. Use of *Super Saver* or Other Special Fares

The use of a non-contract fare/carrier and/or the use of *Super Saver* or other special, restricted, or limited fares should be used only when it is certain that the trip will not be changed.

Use of a restricted fare **must** be specifically authorized on the travel authorization for one of the reasons cited in subparagraph C on page 2-3 above. The SED must authorize these fares in advance for county office travel.

The travel authorization must include a statement to the effect that the employee is liable for any penalties incurred if the restricted fare is not used, unless caused by Agency-directed changes in travel plans **after** the authorization is approved.

The use of *Super Saver* or other special, restricted, or limited fares may be authorized only in the best interests of the government, and when one of the circumstances in subparagraph C are present. An employee's personal interests (i.e., wants to bring a spouse/child/friend, etc., on the trip, wants to combine business and personal travel, etc.) are not the government's concern and do not provide adequate justification for the approval of a non-contract flight or carrier.

## E. Commercial Transportation Ticket Distribution for National Office Employees

The International Services Branch of Foreign Agricultural Affairs is responsible for releasing commercial transportation tickets to National Office employees. ATPS of FMD will continue to control and approve prepaid and special circumstance transportation tickets for FSA personnel only. Employees must use electronic or E-tickets to the maximum extent possible when conducting official travel.

# 4. Airplane Accommodations

## A. Classes of Airline Accommodations

Classes of airline accommodations as defined in the FTR are:

- *Coach-class* - the basic class of accommodations offered to travelers that is available to all passengers regardless of the fare paid. This term applies when an airline offers two or more classes of accommodations, which includes tourist or economy class.
- *Premium-class* - any class of accommodations above coach-class, e.g., first-class or business-class.
- *First-class* - the highest class of accommodations on a multiple-class airline flight. **When an airline flight only has two classes of accommodations, the higher class, regardless of the term used for that class, is considered to be first class.**
- *Premium-class other than first-class* - any class of accommodations between coach-class and first-class accommodations, e.g. business class.
- *Single-class* - this term applies when an airline offers only one class of accommodations to all travelers.

## B. Policy on Use

For official business travel, both domestic and international, an employee must use **coach-class** accommodations.

First-class airline accommodations may be used **only** when one of the following conditions exist and the agency specifically authorizes the use of first-class:

- No other coach class or premium class other than first class accommodation is reasonably available (reasonably available means available on an airline that is scheduled to leave within 24 hours of an employee's proposed departure time, or scheduled to arrive within 24 hours of an employee's proposed arrival time).
- When use of first-class is necessary to accommodate a disability or other special needs that is substantiated in writing by a competent medical authority. First-class travel may also be authorized for an attendant accompanying an employee, if the employee requires the attendant's service enroute.
- First class accommodations are required for security purposes or because special circumstances make their use essential.

**Note:** Employees may upgrade to first class at their own personal expense, including through the redemption of frequent flyer benefits.

Business or other comparable class accommodations may be used when:

- Coach class accommodations are not available and the travel is so urgent it cannot be postponed
- The traveler is severely disabled and cannot use coach class accommodations
- Business class accommodations are required for security purposes or because special circumstances make their use essential
- Coach class accommodations on foreign carriers do not provide adequate health or sanitation standards
- The use of business class accommodations will result in an overall savings to the government
- Business class accommodations are obtained through the redemption of frequent traveler benefits
- Where the origin and/or destination are non-foreign areas outside the continental U.S. and the scheduled flight time, including stopovers and change of planes, is in excess of 14 hours. (In this instance, the employee will not be eligible for a rest stop enroute or a rest period upon arrival at the duty station)

### **C. Approval of Premium-Class Airline Accommodations (FSA Only)**

Only General Officers of the Department may approve premium-class travel for FSA employees. Employees may upgrade to premium class at their personal expense, including through the redemption of frequent flyer benefits.

FAS employees should refer to Part 10, Paragraph 4 for policies and procedures regarding premium-class travel.

## **5 Bonus Goods/Frequent Traveler Benefits**

### **A. Policy**

The National Defense Authorization Act for FY 2002, signed into law on December 28, 2001, contained a provision which allowed Federal employees to retain and make personal use of promotional items such as frequent flyer miles, upgrades, or access to carrier clubs or transportation, earned while on official government travel under the following conditions:

- The promotional items must be obtained under the same conditions as those offered to the general public at no additional cost to the government.
- Applies to both former and current Federal employees and includes all benefits earned before, on, or after December 28, 2001.
- Use of TMCs remains mandatory. Travelers cannot use travel service providers other than the TMC in order to gain frequent traveler benefits for personal use.
- Since it is the policy of the government that employees generally must travel by coach class accommodations and the government cannot pay for any upgrades unless the traveler meets one of the exceptions to the travel regulations. Employees, however, may use frequent traveler benefits to upgrade the transportation class of service at their own expense. Employees who wish to upgrade must first book a coach class ticket through the TMC utilizing the contract carrier and then personally handle the upgrade with the airline.
- It is the responsibility of each traveler to communicate directly with the airline to establish frequent travel promotional benefits accounts. Any associated costs are paid by the traveler and are not a reimbursable expense.
- The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) currently does not tax promotional benefits such as frequent flyer miles. This does not apply, however, to travel or other promotional benefits that are converted to cash, compensation that is paid in the form of travel or other promotional benefits or other instances where these benefits are used for tax avoidance purposes. Travelers should seek further guidance on these issues from either the IRS or a tax professional.

The law does not apply to situations where an employee is “NOT giving up a seat,” such as denied boarding due to a flight being oversold, flight delays, or transfers to another flight because of mechanical failures. Penalty payments or certificates received by the employee in these situations are **not** considered to be “promotional items” and must still be turned over to the government. Bonus goods that must be turned over to the Agency should be used by the office of the traveler who earned them to reduce that office's or division's future travel costs. If that office cannot use the benefit, it should be forwarded to FMD, who in turn, will use it to reduce other Agency travel costs. Unreported earned benefits or their use may subject an employee to disciplinary action or investigation by Department or Agency ethics officers.

**Note:** Questions regarding use of promotional items should be directed to the traveler's supervisor or approving official.

## 6. Rental Cars

### A. When Authorized

The rental of cars and other vehicles may be authorized in the discretion of the approving official when it is **advantageous** to the government. Personal convenience of the employee alone is not adequate justification for the rental of a vehicle, unless medical documentation is provided.

To be reimbursed, rental car expenses must be expressly authorized on a travel authorization.

### B. Federally Contracted Rental Agents - General Rule

A list of Federally contracted rental agents in certain cities may be obtained by contacting your TMC. For cities with Federally contracted agents, one of these agents **must** be used by employees on official travel. Using non-contracted agents in cities with contracted agents is a violation of the contracted agents' contract with the government and may subject the government to damages for a breach of contract. In cities without contracted rental agents, employees may use any available rental agent. Consideration should be given to availability and cost.

### C. Benefits of Using Contracted Rental Agents

Under the terms of their Federal contracts, contracted rental agents must:

- provide a toll free “1-800” number for reservations/ emergency calls
- accept a Government-issued credit card
- rent to any Government employee on official travel who is 18 years of age or older
  - provide a safe, clean, and maintained vehicle that is no more than 2 years old and that has an odometer reading of no more than 40,000 miles.
- provide a full tank of gasoline
- provide shuttle service with a pick-up time not to exceed 15 minutes for off-airport locations
- accept cash for the estimated amount of rental time when a credit card is not used

A copy of the U.S. Government Car Rental Agreement can be found on the MTMC web site at <http://dcsop.mtmc.army.mil/travel/car>.

## **D. Employee Responsibilities**

Employees who rent vehicles while on official travel must:

- be prepared to provide proof of official travel to the rental agent in the form of an approved travel authorization
- use the vehicle for official purposes only
- act prudently when operating the vehicle
- possess a valid driver's license

## **E. Reimbursable Costs Related to Rental Cars**

Employees may be reimbursed for gasoline purchased and other applicable costs in the maintenance of the vehicle.

## **F. GARS Charge**

Beginning October 1, 2002, car rental companies began charging a standard mandatory GARS of \$5.00 per day worldwide. This charge reimburses the rental car company for:

- those costs incurred which are peculiar to doing business with the government, including the application of the agreement terms and conditions on a worldwide basis
- the rental of vehicles to employees under age 25
- acceptance of properly licensed fellow government employees on official business as additional drivers
- guarantee of the maximum rates for at least 60 days

GARS will be paid by all renters and will be listed separately from the rates on the rental agreements.

## **G. Damage Waiver/Insurance Costs**

The Federal Government is self-insured. Employees may **not** be reimbursed for the cost of a collision damage waiver or additional collision damage insurance for official travel conducted within the U.S. (including Alaska and Hawaii), Puerto Rico, or U.S. territories or commonwealths. If official travel is occurring in a foreign country, and foreign statute or legal procedures would cause extreme difficulties for government employees involved in an accident, employees may be reimbursed for the costs of additional collision damage insurance or collision damage waiver.

## **H. Accidents**

If involved in an accident with a rental car:

- do not leave the scene
- summon the police, even in the event of a minor accident. The police will determine if a traffic violation should be issued and will ensure that the parties involved exchange appropriate information such as names, telephone and insurance numbers
- report the accident to the car rental company immediately
- contact your immediate supervisor
- complete and/or provide any reports or documents required by the rental car company, including police reports



Government renters are not subject to any fee for loss/collision damage waiver and in the event of an accident, will not be responsible for loss or damage to the vehicle except in one or more of the following cases:

- willful or wanton misconduct on the part of the driver
- obtaining the vehicle through fraud or misrepresentation
- driver is under the influence of alcohol or any prohibited drug
- use of the vehicle for any illegal purpose
- use of the vehicle in pushing or towing another vehicle
- use or permitting the vehicle to carry passengers or property for hire
- operation of the vehicle in a test, race or contest
- operation of the vehicle by a person other than an authorized driver
- operation of the vehicle outside of CONUS except where such use is specifically authorized by the rental agreement
- operation across international boundaries unless specifically authorized at the time of rental
- operation of the vehicle off paved, graded or maintained roads, or driveways, except when the rental company has agreed to this in writing beforehand

When loss or damage is a result of one or more of the above exceptions, the rental company will submit its bills directly to the employee's agency. If the agency denies liability on the basis that the employee was not operating the vehicle within the scope of employment at the time of the loss, the rental company may handle the matter directly with the employee.

## **7. GFVs (FSA Only)**

### **A. Definition**

GFVs are:

- vehicles owned by USDA, GSA or other Federal executive agencies
- vehicles leased commercially through agreements with car-leasing agencies
- commercially rented vehicles in the Agency's possession obtained through rental agreements

**NOTE:** As a general rule, dependents or non-government personnel are not allowed to ride in government-owned or leased vehicles. However, if approving officials determine otherwise, it must be done on a case-by-case basis after considering all factors involved, including liability to the Government.

### **B. Obtaining a GFV**

Authorizing officials and employees shall comply with the guidelines set forth in Handbooks 30-AS and 31-AS for obtaining a GFV. Questions concerning the use of GFVs should be referred to the MSD. Kansas City complex employees should contact the Kansas City Finance Office.

## 8. Taxicabs, Shuttle Services, or Other Courtesy Transportation

### A. Reimbursable Expenses

Taxicab fare plus 15 percent tip will be allowed for transportation:

- From the employee's home to office and from office to common carrier terminal on the day of departure on an official trip requiring at least 1 night's lodging, and from common carrier terminal to office and office to employee's home on the day of return from the official trip. (In lieu of taxicab, travelers may use a POV and be reimbursed for the round-trip mileage at the applicable POV mileage rate; refer to Paragraph 9B, Mileage Rates)
- Between a place of lodging and a place of business or between places of business at a TDY station (use of a cab for travel at the TDY site should be specifically authorized on the AD-202)
- To obtain meals at the nearest available place where the nature and location of the work at a TDY station are such that meals **cannot** be obtained there

Convenience is not adequate justification for using a taxicab. Use of taxicabs should be restricted when:

- Suitable government or common carrier transportation service, including shuttle service, is available for all or part of the distance involved; or
- Courtesy transportation service is provided by hotels/motels between the place of lodging at the TDY station and the common carrier terminal. Tips to courtesy transportation drivers are allowed and should be limited to one dollar.

## 9. POVs

### A. When Use of POV Is Authorized?

POV transportation may be authorized when such travel is:

- deemed advantageous to the government
- due to a personal preference of the employee, provided that adjustments are made to reimbursable expenses and employee's leave are made to cover additional costs incurred by the government due to excess travel time or costs, if any

**Note:** Using a POV to transport other employees is strictly voluntary. However, if the event that employee(s) travel in another employee's POV, mileage is payable only to one of the employees. No deduction is made from the mileage allowance if other passengers contribute to defraying expenses.

Only mileage driven by the employee and/or other government employee who is also on official travel is reimbursable when use of a POV is authorized due to personal preference of the employee.

If a POV is used instead of a common carrier because of personal preference, an employee is reimbursed on a mileage basis, plus per diem, not to exceed the total constructive cost of the authorized method of common carrier transportation plus per diem.

## B. Mileage Rates

Mileage rates for POV use are as follows (effective 1/1/03):

Type of POV	Mileage rate
Automobile	36 cents per mile
Motorcycle	27.5 cents per mile
Private airplane	95.5 cents per mile

**Note:** GSA makes periodic changes to POV mileage rates. When changes occur, an FI Notice will be issued. The current mileage rates can also be found on the GSA website at:  
<http://www.policyworks.gov/perdiem>.

## C. Mileage Rate Exceptions

Exceptions to the POV mileage rates for automobiles are as follows:

- If employee using a POV is previously committed to a GFV - 10.5 cents per mile

Example: An FSA office has a GFV, which is assigned to a particular employee due to the fact that this employee travels extensively by automobile on official business and it is advantageous to the government that this employee be assigned a GFV. This employee is considered to be "committed" to using this GFV and will ordinarily not be authorized to use a POV. However, if on occasion the employee is approved to use the POV for personal preference, the mileage rate for use of the POV would be 10.5 cents per mile.

- If a GFV is available - 28.5 cents per mile

Example: An FSA office has a GFV, which is not assigned to any one particular employee. Since no one is "committed" to this vehicle, it is then "available" and advantageous to the government to be used for official travel by another employee. If that employee is approved to use his/her POV, the mileage rate would be 28.5 cents.

- Employees designated as high-mileage drivers - 28.5 cents per mile. (Refer to Handbook 30-AS for information in regard to high-mileage drivers)

## D. Additional Expenses

An employee using a POV may be reimbursed for the following expenses *in addition to* the mileage rate:

- parking fees (**Note:** Parking fees at a common carrier terminal cannot exceed the cost of taxi fare to/from the terminal)
- ferry fees
- bridge, road, and tunnel fees
- airplane parking, landing and tie-down fees

**Note:** Mileage rate reimbursements listed in Section 9B and 9C of this part cover all costs incurred in the operation of a POV such as insurance, gasoline, mechanical breakdowns, and wear and tear on the POV. The cost of these items may not be reimbursed as an additional expense.

**E. Mileage Between Residence and Office on Day Official Travel is Performed can be Reimbursed When:**

- you travel from your home to your office on the day you depart the office on an official trip requiring at least one night's lodging, and
- you travel from your office to your home on the day you return to the office from your trip.

**NOTE:** The information in Paragraph 9-E was referenced from the FTR 301-10-420, part C.

**F. Accidents While Using POVs**

If an employee is involved in an accident while using his or her POV when on official business performing duties, the government may be responsible for any tort liability, but generally not damages to the employee's personal vehicle since the mileage reimbursement by the government for use of POV includes costs for the employee's insurance to cover such occurrences. If the accident occurred during personal travel or on the weekend when not in official business status, the employee, not the government, would be responsible for any sort of liability.

An employee may file a claim under the Military Personnel and Civilian Employees Claims Act against the government for damages to, or loss of, property incident to the employee's service. Employees who use their POV's for official travel are encouraged to check their private insurance policies to ensure they are covered under these circumstances.

**10. Reimbursement of Local Travel (FSA Only)****A. Reference**

Policy for reimbursement of local travel expenses was removed from Handbook 97-FI and published in Notice FI-2541, Reimbursing Employees for Official Local Travel, dated 9/13/02.

**B. Definition**

Local travel is defined as official travel performed in the vicinity of the ODS. The following terms and definitions apply to local travel:

- *Limits of the ODS* - the corporate limits of the city or town where an employee is stationed **or** an established area around the ODS having definite boundaries. Approving officials are responsible for defining the limits of the ODS and ensuring employees are aware of the limits for travel purposes. **In the absence of such a definition by the approving official**, the limits of the ODS will be an area within a **50-mile** radius of the ODS.
- *ODS* - the location of an employee's permanent work assignment; i.e., the place where an employee is assigned administratively or functionally, whether it be the office that maintains the employee on payroll or provides the employee work space. This could be the county office to which an employee is assigned or if assigned to multiple county offices, it is the place where the employee performs the major part of his/her duties or spends the greater portion of his/her time. For a field employee, the ODS is **established by the CED**, after considering the major area of work. Unless specifically designated as such by DAFO/Human Resources Division (HRD), a residence **cannot** be designated as an ODS.
- *Official residence* - the home or abode from which the employee commutes daily to and from the ODS. Travel between an employee's residence and the ODS is not considered to be "official business" and employees may not be reimbursed mileage for expenses for travel between these locations regardless of the location, or whether regular, overtime, or call back overtime duty is performed.

## B. Definition, *continued*

- *Travel headquarters* - designated place from where the employee begins official travel. Expenses may be reimbursed for travel beginning at this point. For most employees, the travel headquarters is the ODS; however, the travel headquarters may be established at a residence for employees who routinely travel to various TDY stations from the residence in order to reduce transportation costs, per diem payments, or the employees time away from duty. **NOTE:** Although management may designate an employee's residence as the travel headquarters (if advantageous to the government), **under no circumstances** can an employee be reimbursed for travel from the residence to the ODS, even if the residence is the travel headquarters.

## C. Authority for Travel

Supervisors/approving officials are responsible for determining and authorizing the **mode** of transportation and departure point that is most advantageous to the government for local travel and conveying it to the employee. In most instances, POV will be cost advantageous; however, public transportation, if available, should be utilized. Taxicabs should not be used unless determined advantageous to the government. Personal convenience is not justification for use of a taxicab when other forms of mass transit are available. POV mileage is limited to the most direct, commonly traveled route unless unusual circumstances are cause for the approving official to otherwise authorize another route of travel.

## D. Policy

The policy is to make its employees whole if they incur local travel expenses in excess of their normal commuting costs to and from their workplace. Employees should not incur additional cost or receive a windfall as a result of performing local travel.

## E. Travel Within the Limits of the ODS

If an employee travels to a location **within the limits** of the ODS for training, meetings, or other official business, reimbursement is limited to those transportation costs that **exceed** the normal commuting costs and should be claimed as follows:

- If the employee normally commutes to the ODS using a POV, then the employee may only claim local travel expenses in excess of the normal POV commuting mileage, plus parking fees and tolls not normally incurred.
- If the employee normally commutes to a workplace using public transportation for which a charge per ride is assessed, then the employee may claim local travel expenses in excess of daily public transportation costs.
- If an employee normally commutes to a workplace using public transportation, a car pool, or van pool, where the employee pays on a weekly or monthly basis, whether the employee rides or not, then the employee may claim all local travel expenses since the employee paid the commuting cost already.

## **F. Examples of Travel Within the Limits of the ODS**

- For travel that begins and ends at the ODS, the employee is reimbursed for actual mileage plus parking fees/tolls not normally incurred.
- For travel that begins at the residence and ends at the ODS or vice versa, the employee is reimbursed for actual mileage that exceeds the normal commuting mileage plus parking fees/tolls not normally incurred.
- For travel that begins and ends at the residence, including travel to multiple sites within the ODS, the employee is reimbursed for actual mileage that exceeds normal commuting mileage plus parking fees/tolls not normally incurred.

## **G. Travel Outside the Limits of the ODS**

If the alternate duty point is not located within the limits of the ODS, then normal commuting costs are not deducted.

## **H. Examples of Travel Outside the Limits of the ODS**

- For travel that begins and ends at the ODS, the employee is reimbursed for actual mileage plus parking fees/toll not normally incurred.
- For travel that begins at the residence and ends at the ODS or vice versa, the employee is reimbursed for actual mileage plus parking fees/tolls not normally incurred.
- For travel that begins and ends at the residence, including travel to multiple sites (at least one of which is located outside the limits of the ODS), the employee is reimbursed for actual mileage plus parking fees/tolls not normally incurred.

## **I. Travel to Multiple Sites**

For travel to multiple sites that are located both within and outside the limits of the ODS, the employee is reimbursed according to Paragraphs E and G above. This rule applies to all employees including GS and CO employees who are assigned to multiple offices.

# **11. Mileage Claims**

## **A. Establishment of Travel Headquarters**

For the majority of employees, the travel headquarters is the ODS. Travel headquarters at the employee's residence may be established for an employee who routinely travels to various TDY stations directly from the residence in order to reduce transportation costs, per diem, and the employee's time away from duty. Travel headquarters at the residence must not be established for employees who live within a reasonable commuting distance of their ODS or if it will increase mileage and per diem payments.

## **B. Fixed Mileage**

Fixed mileage may be established and used for:

- COC members traveling between their homes and the county office. Established distances, based on commonly traveled routes, must be recorded in the county office files and established travel time may be used in accordance with Handbook 27-PM, subparagraph 699 B.
- CO employees making daily or frequently recurring official trips between the county office and fixed points, such as local businesses or other county offices. The State office should determine whether trips are justified. The established distances for these trips, based on commonly traveled routes, must be recorded in the county office files.

Actual mileage, based on odometer readings, shall be claimed by:

- COC members, if distances have not been established. If a trip is a combination of both established and non-established mileage, use odometer readings for the entire trip. The AD-616 should show non-established mileage or a combination of non-established and established mileage.
- Any employee who is not authorized either an established mileage or flat rate allowance. Employees under a flat rate allowance may not claim mileage in addition to the flat rate allowed for travel.

## **C. Flat Rate Allowance**

A flat rate allowance for travel may be used for field employees paid on an hourly basis, who do not have an established tour of duty. This allowance:

- shall be in place of mileage, common carrier, or per diem.
- may be paid per day, per hour, per unit, or per trip.
- shall not prevent reimbursement for necessary supplies or other incidental expenses the traveler incurs.

A record should be placed in the employee's personnel folder showing the established rate, the method used to determine the rate, and necessary information to justify the rate. If the rate is the same for all employees or groups of employees, one record should be on file for each group. Flat rate allowances should be claimed on an AD-616.